QUEENSLAND KINSHIP CARE FORUM

MONDAY 2 SEPTEMBER 2019
9.00AM - 4.00PM (9.30AM START)

RIVERSIDE RECEPTIONS
BALLROOM
50 OXLADE DRIVE, NEW FARM, QLD

PeakCare Queensland, with the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak (QATSICPP), CREATE Foundation and Queensland Foster and Kinship Care (QFKC) are pleased to host:

• Dr Lucy Peak, Chief Executive of Grandparents Plus, a national charity in England and Wales supporting both formal and informal kinship carers; and
• Meredith Kiraly, psychologist and Research Fellow in the Social Work Department at the University of Melbourne, whose specialty research area is kinship care

At the Queensland Kinship Care Forum on Monday 2 September 2019.

This forum is for kinship (relatives or extended family) carers, both where legal orders providing authority to care for a child exist or other informal family arrangements are in place, and government and non-government practitioners, policy makers and academics.

WHY IS A QUEENSLAND KINSHIP CARE FORUM BEING HELD?

Relative or kinship carers undertake a role caring for a related child. This brings significant social and economic benefits to the community and helps keep children safe, within their family and culture, and removes the need for these children to be catered for in other types of out-of-home care. However, these carers can face a range of stressors including financial stress, legal insecurity, challenges managing family relationships, difficulty accessing services and supports for children who may have experienced loss and trauma, and impacts on physical and emotional health.

In addition to the almost 4000 Queensland children subject to child protection orders being cared for by formally approved kinship carers through the statutory child protection system, there are an unknown number of family members caring informally for child relatives through private family arrangements (with or without family court orders) who may have even more challenges in accessing supports. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families caring for children within their kinship system also have unique cultural and kinship obligations and specific support needs which impact on these families.
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The Kinship Care Forum is aimed at progressing the national agenda to raise awareness about the lack of recognition and support for extended family members caring for children, and find a way forward to recognise the rights and unique support needs of these children and their kinship carers.

Keynote speaker, Dr Lucy Peak, established the Kinship Connected program which has been adopted by a number of local authorities in the United Kingdom. The program consists of trained project workers, independent from the statutory agency, who provide one on one support to kinship families as well as establishing support groups and links to other workshops and support services. Evaluations of the program have found kinship carers experienced reduced isolation, decreased financial concerns, felt better supported in managing children’s behaviours, improved relationships with family members and increased confidence in their role and responsibilities as a carer.

Dr Peak has been a tireless campaigner working for change by raising awareness of the role grandparents and other extended family members are playing in modern families and fighting for access to support for extended family members raising children.

In 2015 Meredith Kiraly conducted a review of surveys of over 3000 kinship carers in Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. The review suggests kinship care is not well conceptualised, as kinship families generally understand themselves as providing in-home, family care rather than “out-of-home care” and suggests policy should recognise kinship care as a unique form of care rather than a variant of foster care.

It is hoped this “knowledge exchange” with Dr Lucy Peak, Meredith Kiraly, local colleagues and kinship carers will assist with raising the profile of kinship care in Queensland and move us closer to the goal of appropriate recognition and support for all extended family members who take on the enormously rewarding and challenging role of caring for child relatives.

Dr Peak’s Australian speaking tour has been coordinated and funded by the New South Wales Association of Children’s Welfare Agencies (ACWA).

1 Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women, Published child protection statistics 30 June 2018

2 Meredith Kiraly CFCA Paper No. 31, Australian Institute of Family Studies, March 2015

For enquiries about the forum, please contact Annika Stehn via email (astehn@peakcare.org.au) or phone (07 3368 1050).